

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 724

INFO USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMCONSUL CALI UNN

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 0001

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: YEAREND ROUNDUP

BEGIN SUMMARY. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON APR 21, 74. THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE, ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN, IS ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE THE FRONT RUNNER; ALVARO GOMEZ, THE CONSERVATIVE, IS WAGING A WELL FINANCED, INTELLIGENT CAMPAIGN, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL HE CAN OVERCOME THE LIBERAL MAJORITY. THE ANAPO CANDIDATE, MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO IS CAMPAIGNING VIROROUSLY, BUT THE STRATEGY SHE IS USING SEEMS TO BE LOSING HER VOTES TO GOMEZ ON THE RIGHT WITHOUT ANY APPRECIABLE GAINS ON THE LEFT. THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN MARKED BY RESTRAINT AND THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF SERIOUS OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE. PRES PASTRANA, A CONSERVATIVE, IS COMPLETELY IMPARTIAL, AS IS THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. UP TO NOW THE US AND ITS POLICIES HAVE NOT BEEN AN ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

1. BY THE END OF 73 THE PRES CAMPAIGN HAD BEEN IN FULL SWING FOR OVER THREE MONTHS, WITH ALMOST FOUR MONTHS TO GO BEFORE
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ELECTIONS ON APR 21, 74. THE ANAPO CANDIDATE, MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO, KEPT ON WORKING THRU THE HOLIDAYS AND THE CONSERVATIVE, ALVARO GOMEZ, MADE A LAST-MINUTE DECISION TO DO THE SAME. ALFONSO LOPEZ, THE LIBERAL, WENT TO THE US FOR SEVERAL

DAYS REST.

2. LOPEZ IS THE ACKNOWLEDGED FRONT RUNNER IN THE CAMPAIGN DESPITE HIS LACK OF CHARISMA, CONTRADICTIONARY STATEMENTS, VAGUE PROGRAMS AND INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH MASSES OF PEOPLE. MANY REPORTS ARE CIRCULATING ABOUT HIS POOR HEALTH AND HEAVY DRINKING, BUT THOSE WHO KNOW HIM BEST TELL US HE IS IN BETTER SHAPE NOW THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST EIGHT OR TEN YEARS. HE DOES NOT ENJOY REALLY GOOD HEALTH, BUT HE SEEMS TO BE HOLDING UP WELL ENOUGH UNDER THE STRAINS OF THE CAMPAIGN. MRS MORENO AND GOMEZ ARE WORKING THE HARDEST, WITH LOPEZ MOVING ALONG AT A MEASURED PACE TO PROTECT HIS HEALTH. BOTH GOMEZ AND MORENO ARE IN EXCELLENT PHYSICAL CONDITION. MRS MORENO PLANYPTO VISIT TWO-THIRDS OF COLOMBIA'S 922 MUNICIPIOS BEFORE ELECTION DAY AND TO HOLD 300 RALLIES IN BOGOTA, WHERE SHE HAS HER OWN FOLLOWING AND IS COUNTING ON A LARGE VOTE FROM THE LOWER CLASSES.

3. SOME OF THE MORE IMPORTANT ISSUES THE CANDIDATES HAVE DISCUSSED TO DATE HAVE BEEN THE COST OF LIVING, EDUCATION AND OTHER GOVT SERVICES, CORRUPTION IN GOVT, AGRARIAN REFORM AND AGRIC PRODUKTION AND PERSONAL SECURITY. THE REAL ISSUA, HOWEVER, WHICH ENCOMPASSES ALL OF THESE, IS STABILITY AND CONSOLIDATION VS CONTINUED ATTEMPTS AT SOCIAL CHANGE WITH THE RESULTANT SHOCKS TO SOCIETY. GOMEZ BELIEVES THAT MANY PEOPLE ARE TIRED OF NEW LAWS, REFORMS AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS. HE CANNOT OPENLY SAY SO, BUT HE IS GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS THAT IF YOU WANT A BREATHER AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF CHANGE, OR TALK OF CHANGE, VOTE FOR ALVARO. THE HEART OF HIS MESSAGE IS LET'S SETTLE DOWN, STIMULATE PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS AND BY THIS MEANS DEVELOP A TRULY STRONG AND HEALTHY SOCIETY. LOPEZ TALKS ABOUT THE NEED FOR CONTINUED SOCIAL PROGRESS, REDISTRIBUTION OF INCOME, THE GREAT LIBERAL TRADITIONS, BUT HIS HEART SEEMS NOT TO BE IN WHAT HE IS SAYING. STILL, HE REPRESENTS THE FORCES OF MODERATE CHANGE AND THE ISSUE IS CLEARLY DRAWN, IF UNSPOKEN. MRS MORENO ESPOUSES A MIXTURE OF POPULISM AND SOCIALISM. THE ANAPO CAMPAIGN THEME IS "SOCIALISMO A LA COLOMBIANA", DEFINED AS POSITIVE NATIONALISM, COLOMBIA FOR THE COLOMBIANS, OPPOSITION TO IMPER-

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IALISM FROM ALL QUARTERS, ACCESS BY THE LITTLE MAN TO EDUCATION, CREDIT, HOUSING AND JOBS AND PARTICIPATION OF ALL CLASSES IN GOVT. TO DATE NONE OF THE CANDIDATES HAS DRAGGED THE US INTO THE CAMPAIGN, NOR WOULD BE PROPOSED POLICIES OF EITHER GOMEZ OR LOPEZ BE DETRIMENTAL TO US INTERESTS. MRS MORENO HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING AND THE ANAPO RHETORIC, IN ANY EVENT, IS JUST THAT.

4. IF ALVARO GOMEZ IS TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF WINNING, HE NEEDS TO RALLY AS MANY CONSERVATIVE ANAPISTAS TO HIS BANNER AS HE CAN. HIS STRATEGY HAS BEEN TO BRAND ANAPO AS MARXIST AND COMMUNIST, THUS SCARING MANY CONSERVATIVE ANAPISTAS IN RURAL COLOMBIA BACK INTO THEIR PARTY OF ORIGIN. MRS MORENO IS FURIOUS AT THE TACTIC, WHICH APPEARS TO BE WORKING WELL, AND SHE LASHES

OUT AT GOMEZ AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. UNFORTUNATELY FOR MORENO, SHE HAS PLAYED INTO GOMEZ' HANDS. THE BACKBONE OF ANAPO HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONSERVATIVE VOTES, EVEN THOUGH MANY LIBERALS WENT OVER TO THE THIRD PARTY AFTER ALFONSO LOPEZ ENTERED GOVT IN 67. NOW, MOST LIBERAL ANAPISTAS ARE BACK WITH LOPEZ, BUT MORENO AND HER ADVISORS, RATHER THAN ATTEMPT TO BUILD ON THE CONSERVATIVE BASE, HAVE ALIENATED THIS SECTOR BY TAKING ON LEFTIST ADVISORS AND SPOUTING LEFTIST JARGON. THE CANDIDATE'S HUSBAND, SENATOR SAMUEL MORENO, HAS CONVINCED HER THAT SHE MUST SEEK THE VOTES OF THE URBAN POOR AND THE RESENTFUL -- THOSE WHO HAVE A GRUDGE AGAINST THE PRESENT SYSTEM. THE STRATEGY PROBABLY IS NOT PICKING UP LEFT OF CENTER VOTES, BUT IT CERTAINLY SEEMS TO BE HELPING ALVARO GOMEZ ON THE RIGHT. AS FOR THE FAR LEFT, THIS ELEMENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MINOR FACTOR IN COLOMBIAN POLITICAL LIFE; OF THE FEW VOTES THAT ARE OUT THERE, MOST ARE ALREADY COM-

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USIA-15 AID-20 PC-04 DRC-01 /123 W

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R 021443Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 725

INFO USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 0001

MITTED TO THE LEFTIST COALITION CANDIDATE OF UNO (UNION OF NATIONAL OPPOSITION). THE ONLY ELEMENT IN THE ANAPO STRATEGY THAT MAKES SENSE HAS TO DO WITH THE PROBABILITY THAT GENERAL ROJAS WILL DIE BEFORE THE NEXT SCHEDULED PRES ELECTIONS IN 78. ONCE HE GOES THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE HIS DAUGHTER CAN KEEP THE ALLEGIANCE OF HIS FOLLOWERS. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HER ADVISORS BELIEVE THEY MUST SEEK NOW TO ESTABLISH A NEW*POLITICAL BASE ON WHICH TO BUILD. ALTHOUGH MORENO TALKS ABOUT WINNING, WHAT SHE AND THE TOP LEADERSHIP WANT IS TO KEEP THE PARTY ALIVE AND RETURN AS LARGE A DELEGATION AS POSSIBLE TO THE CONGRESS .

5. BY FAR THE MOST MONEY HAS BEEN SPENT BY ALVARO GOMEZ; HIS CAMPAIGN IS WELL-FINANCED AND HIS FIRST NAME COVERS THE COUNTRY (AN ATTEMPT TO DISASSOCIATE HIM FROM THE NAME OF GOMEZ, WHICH

IS ANATHEMA TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF LIBERALS BECAUSE OF THEIR BELIEF THAT ALVARO'S FATHER INITIATED AND FANNED THE VIOLENCE OF THE FORTIES AND EARLY FIFTIES). THE LIBERALS TELL US THEY HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO DO ALL THE ADVERTISING NEEDED AND THAT THEY WILL BEGIN TO SPEND HEAVILY FOR PROPAGANDA IN JANUARY. ANAPO IS HARD UP FOR MONEY, BUT THERE ARE ENOUGH ASPIRANTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL SEATS TO FINANCE MRS MORENO'S RALLIES. A CONSERVATIVE CLOSE TO GOMEZ HAS TOLD US THAT THERE IS NOW CONFIDENTIAL

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46,000,000 PESOS IN THE CONSERVATIVE PRES CAMPAIGN CHEST (ONE PESO EQUALS FOUR US CENTS) AND THAT AT LEAST THAT MUCH MORE WILL BE COLLECTED AND SPENT BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. THE LIBERALS HAVE MUCH LESS CASH IN HAND THAN THE CONSERVATIVES AND CALCULATE THAT THE LOPEZ CAMPAIGN WILL COST A TOTAL OF 66,000,000 PESOS. THE CAMPAIGNS OF CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES AND THOSE FOR LOCAL OFFICES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THESE FIGURES.

6. ONE OF THE GREAT UNKNOWNNS FOR THE LIBERALS IS THE ATTITUDE FORMER PRES CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO WILL FINALLY ADOPT. WHEN 73 BEGAN LLERAS WAS THE SUPREME LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, BUSILY ENGAGED IN REORGANIZING PARTY STRUCTURES AND COYLY PREPARING THE WAY FOR HIS OWN CANDIDACY. AS THE YEAR CLOSED HE HAD NO OFFICIAL STATUS IN THE PARTY, REFUSED TO SPEAK OUT ON POLITICAL MATTERS, AND HAD MADE NO ENDORSEMENT OF LOPEZ. AFTER LOPEZ BEAT HIM IN JUNE FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY NOMINATION LLERAS SULKED FOR MONTHS. LLERISTAS ARE CONCERNED THAT UNLESS THEIR LEADER JUMPS INTO THE CAMPAIGN THEY WILL BE LEFT UN*? PROTECTED IN THE JOCKEYING FOR POSITION ON THE ELECTORAL LISTS AND WILL HAVE NO CLAIM ON CHOICE JOBS IN THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT LLERAS NEEDS A BIT MORE TIME TO GET OVER HIS DEFEAT; HE ALSO SEEMS TO WANT LOPEZ TO COME TO HIM TO SAY "WE NE*D YOU", AT WHICH TIME HE CAN DEMAND SOME CONCESSIONS ON STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS. HE NO LONGER CONSIDERS LOPEZ A FRIEND AND IS KNOWN TO BE OUL OF SYMPATHY WITH THE CAMPAIGN AND LOPEZ' TREATMENT OF THE ISSUES. THE EX-PRESIDENT HAS MANY SUPPORTERS, BUT JUST AS MANY ENEMIES. MOST OF THE LATTER ARE TO BE FOUND AROUND LOPEZ AND PARTY DIR JULIO CESAR TURBAY. THESE ARE THE MEN WHO ARE RUNNING THE LIBERAL PARTY TODAY AND WE DOUBT THEY WILL CRAWL TO LLERAS AFTER SUFFERING REAL OR IMAGINED HURTS AT HIS HANDS FOR SO MANY YEARS. ONE FACTOR THAT MAY INFLUENCE LLERAS TO ENTER THE CAMPAIGN IS THE CHANCE TO SMASH GOMEZ. A MOB BURNED HIS HOUSE IN 1952 AND IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT YOUNG GOMEZ ORGANIZED AND LED THE ARSONISTS. LLERAS TOLD A FRIEND A FEW WEEKS AGO THAT HE WOULD ENTER THE CAMPAIGN ONLY IF GOMEZ HAD A CHANCE OF WINNING AND HIS INFO AS OF EARLY DEC WAS THAT THE LIBERALS WERE SO STRONG IN ALL OF COLOMBIA'S CITIES THAT GOMEZ COULD NOT POSSIBLY WIN. NEVERTHELESS, LLERAS NEEDS THE LIBERAL PARTY MORE THAN THE PARTY NEEDS HIM AT THIS POINT AND WE EXPECT TO SEE HIM WORKING FOR THE TICKET NOT LATER THAN MARCH FIRST.

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7. ONE QUESTION VERY MUCH ON THE MINDS OF COLOMBIAN LEADERS IS WHETHER THERE WILL BE A RETURN TO VIOLENCE IN THE FIRST FREELY CONTESTED NATIONAL ELECTIONS SINCE 1949. LOPEZ AND GOMEZ ARE DETERMINED TO KEEP THE CAMPAIGN FROM DEGENERATING INTO NAMECALLING AND BLOODSHED AND AGREED BEFORE THE CAMPAIGN STARTED TO INVESTIGATE ALL INCIDENTS AND FIX BLAME IMPARTIALLY. UNFORTUNATELY, THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PRESS HAVE NOT DONE MUCH TO MAINTAIN THE DIALOGUE ON AN UNEMOTIONAL PLANE, BUT THE CANDIDATES HAVE SO FAR SHOWN RESTRAINT IN THEIR PUBLIC REMARKS. THE LIBERALS ARE CONFIDENT OF VICTORY AND CERTAINLY HAVE NO NEED TO AROUSE OLD HATREDS. GOMEZ, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS IN A VERY REAL DILEMMA. HE IS COUNTING ON LOPEZ' LACK OF CHARISMA AND LIBERAL DIVISIONS TO CAUSE A HIGH RATE OF ABSTENTION AMONG LIBERALS ON ELECTION DAY AND HOPES TO SQUEEZE TO A NARROW VICTORY WITH THE VOTES OF FORMER ANAPISTAS AND AN AROUSED CONSERVATIVE PARTY. HIS PROBLEM, HOWEVER, IS HOW TO KEEP THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AT A HIGH PITCH OF ENTHUSIASM WITHOUT USING THE LIBERALS AS A WHIPPING POST. SO FAR, HE HAS TROD CAREFULLY IN THIS AREA IN ORDER NOT TO PROVOKE A BACKLASH THAT WOULD SINK HIM UNDER AN AVALANCHE OF LIBERAL VOTES. MRS MORENO IS A CLOSE FRIEND OF LOPEZ AND THEY HAVE SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDED ATTACKING EACH OTHER. LOPEZ HAS CONSTRUED CERTAIN CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS TO MEAN HE CAN APPOINT ANAPISTAS TO HIS GOVT, DESPITE THE REQUIREMENT FOR PARITY IN NON-CIVIL SERVICE JOBS BETWEEN LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES. HE BELIEVES THE BEST MEANS TO PUT AN END TO ANAPO AS A MAJOR OPPOSITION FORCE IS TO CO-OPT IT INTO THE GOVT.

8. PRES PASTRANA IS MAINTAINING AN ABSOLUTELY IMPARTIAL STANCE IN THE CAMPAIGN. SO WELL IS HE SUCCEEDING THAT LIBERALS HOLD HIM ABOVE SUSPICION, WHILE CONSERVATIVES COMPLAIN THAT THE LEAST A CONSERVATIVE PRES SHOULD DO IS TO TILT HIS IMPARTIALITY SLIGHTLY TOWARD HIS CORELIGIONARIES. PASTRANA IS NOT A STRONG EXEC, HOWEVER, AND LIBERALS COMPLAIN THAT SOME CONSERVATIVES IN KEY GOVT JOBS ARE USING THEIR OFFICES TO BENEFIT THE GOMEZ CANDIDACY. THE LIBERALS HAVE HALF THE GOVT AND WE DOUBT THEY ARE LESS ADEPT THAN THE CONSERVATIVES IN THE POLITICAL USES OF PUBLIC OFFICE. THE ARMY IS COMPLETELY NEUTRAL AND THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF ANY MILITARY INTERFERENCE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

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9. WE WILL SUBMIT MORE DETAILED STATISTICAL ANALYSES LATER, BUT FOR NOW IT IS ENOUGH TO KEEP IN MIND THAT OF COLOMBIA'S 22 DEPARTMENTS THE ONLY ONES CONSIDERED TO BE SOLIDLY IN THE CONSERVATIVE COLUMN ARE ANTIOQUIA, BOYACA, CALDAS, GUAJIRA, HUILA, NARIÑO AND SANTANDER. THE OVER-ALL CONSERVATIVE MARGIN IN THESE SEVEN DEPTS PROBABLY WILL NOT AMOUNT TO MORE THAN 200,000 VOTES. THE LIBERALS CAN WIPE OUT THAT MARGIN IN BOGOTA

ALONG IF THEY GET OUT THE VOTE HERE. IN SHORT, ALVARO GOMEZ IS
WAGING AN UPHILL FIGHT. HE HAS THE MONEY, THE ORGANIZATIONAL
SKILLS AND POLITICAL INSTINCTS TO CLOSE THE GAP APPRECIABLY
BUT PROBABLY NOT ENOUGH TO WIN.
WHITE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 27 JUL 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROPAGANDA, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, ELECTION CANDIDATES, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE, VOTING ABSTENTIONS, SECURITY CONTROLS, PARTY LEADERS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BOGOTA00001
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740175/abbrzbzw.tel
Line Count: 278
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <09 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: YEAREND ROUNDUP
TAGS: PINT, CO, (MICHELSEN, ALFONSO LOPEZ), (DE MORENO, MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS)
To: STATE INFO USCINCSO
SAN JOSE
CALI UNN
MEDELLIN UNN
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

